

**George Washington to Henry Riddell, February 22, 1774, The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.**

**To HENRY RIDDELL<sup>1</sup>**

Mount Vernon, February 22, 1774.

Sir: Mr. Young, hearing me express a desire of importing Palatines to settle on my lands on the Ohio, tells me, that, in discoursing coursing of this matter in your company, you suggested an expedient, which might probably be attended with success; and that if I inclined to adopt it, you wished to be informed before the sailing of your ship.

The desire of seating and improving my lands on the Ohio, is founded on interested as well as political views. But the intention of importing Palatines for the purpose was more the effect of sudden and undigested thought, than mature consideration, because I am totally unacquainted with the manner, as well as the expence of doing it; and I was led into the notion principally from a report of either this or some other ship of yours being blamed, for not taking an offered freight of these Germans at forty shillings sterling. This induced me to think if this charge was not much accumulated by other expences, that I could fall upon no better expedient to settle my lands with industrious people, than by such an importation.

The terms upon which I have thought of importing Palatines, or people from Ireland, or Scotland, (both of which have been recommended to me) are these. To import them at my expence, where they are unable to transport themselves at their own into this River, and from hence to the Ohio. To have them, in the first case, engaged to me under indenture; in the second, by some other contract equally valid, to become tenants upon the terms hereafter mentioned; as without these securities, I would not encounter the expence, trouble, and hazard of such an importation.

But to make matters as easy and as agreeable as possible to these emigrants, I will engage, on my part, that these indentures shall be considered in no other light, than as a security for reimbursing me every expence I am under, with interest, in importing them, removing them to the land, and supporting them there, till they can raise a crop for their own subsistence; giving up the said indentures, and considering them altogether as freemen and tenants, so soon as this shall happen; not to each person or family respectively, but when the whole accumulated expence shall be discharged; as I must, for my own safety, consider them as jointly bound to this payment, till the

expiration of the indented terms, otherwise I must be an inevitable table loser by every death and other accident; whilst they cannot, in the worst light, be considered as more than servants at large during the indented term. I can also engage to set them down upon as good land as any in that country; and, where there is neither house built, nor land cleared, I allow them an exemption of rent four years; and, where there is a house erected, and five acres of land cleared and fit for cultivation, two years.

I will also engage the land to them upon lease for twenty-one years, under the usual covenants; and also at an annual rent, after the first becomes due, of four pounds sterling for each hundred acres, allowing each family to take more or less, as inclination and convenience may prompt them. And I will, moreover, engage to renew the leases at the expiration of the above twenty-one years; and, in like manner, at the end of every seven afterwards, upon an increased rent, to be agreed on between the landlord and tenant; or, in order to fix the matter absolutely, if this shall be more agreeable, the rent may be increased at these periods in proportion to the increased value of that, or the adjoining lands possessed of equal advantages of soil and situation.

These are the terms on which I thought to import and plant people on my Ohio lands, which are, for the quantity, equal if not superior to any in that country; laying altogether upon the Ohio, or Great Kanhawa, two fine inland navigable rivers, resembling the Rhine in Germany abounding in fish and wild fowl of all sorts, as the lands do in wild meats of the best kind.

From Alexandria to the navigable waters of the Ohio, along a much frequented road used by wagons, is, according to the computed distance, two hundred miles. This land-carriage, if the inland navigation of the Potomac should be effected, than which I think nothing easier, will be reduced to sixty miles as matters now stand; some say forty, and others are of opinion to twenty miles. But call it the greatest distance, any commodity made upon any part of these lands of mine may be transported along a very easy water-communication to the settlement of Red-stone, where the land-carriage at this time begins. To say nothing, therefore, of the advantages of raising stock of all kinds, and horses, which will carry themselves to market, and are now and will, from the nature of things, continue to be in great demand in the interior parts of this great continent, hemp, flax, pot-ash, indigo, etc. will well afford the expence of this land-carriage, admitting it never is reduced, and can be cultivated to great advantage on the river bottoms in that country, as most indeed all of these lands of mine consist

Having thus exhibited a general view of my design, I shall now be obliged to you, Sir, to inform me with as much precision as you can, what certainty there is of your ships going to Holland? what probable certainty of its getting Palatines, if it does go there? when they may be expected in this country? what would be the freight; and, as near as you can judge, the whole incident expence

attending each person delivered at Alexandria? and, moreover, whether it would be expected, that the whole of these charges, including freight, should be paid down immediately upon the arrival of the ship here, as it must appear rather hard to make a certain provision for an uncertain event.

I was near forgetting to observe, that I should not chose to be incumbered with a great number of small people (children) because they will add greatly to my trouble and expence and at the same time they contribute nothing to my design. I do not however by this mean to be totally exempt from them; but in case of choice, to avoid those families which have too many of the small fry in them. It may not be amiss further to observe that I see no prospect of these people being restrained in the smallest degree, either in their civil or religious principles; which I take notice of, because these are privileges, which mankind are solicitous to enjoy, and emigrants must be anxious to know.

I had wrote to Philadelphia by the last post (previous to the receipt of your message) for full information of the manner and charge of importing these people from Holland; and, if your account in answer to this letter should prove agreeable to my wishes, I could send a more descriptive account of the lands, I want to settle, as well as copies of the plots, and do any other matter or thing which might be judged necessary to further the design. I am, &c.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> merchant of Piscataway, Md. He offered to forward Washington's plan of importing Palatinates on certain terms, which he notes in a letter to Washington dated Feb. 24, 1774.

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<sup>2</sup>his letter is in the Washington Papers. Hamilton prints it in his Letters to Washington, vol. 4, p. 337.